

IMPLICATIONS OF PUBLIC OPINION POLLS FOR FREEZE STRATEGY  
Daniel Ellsberg

[Transcript of informal presentation made to Northern California Nuclear Weapons Freeze, February 8, 1985.]

(DRAFT--Not for publication without permission. Contact Daniel Ellsberg c/o Northern California Freeze, 2519 Mission St., San Francisco, CA 94110, telephone 415-824-4144.)

THE 1984 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

One lesson that could be drawn from this last campaign could be the following: Nobody who has served as an advisor to a President before, or who has been associated with government, should be allowed near foreign policy. To say that implies that we should never again put any trust at all, as a standard bearer, in a candidate who relies primarily on people who have participated in the national security process in the last 20 years.

Now, that is an ominous thought. Certain information is restricted to government-certified experts. They are the ones who know the score, the players, the options. But not one of them has been hired by a president who wanted to end the arms race, or who wanted to hire people who would teach him how to end the arms race. Everyone who has earned his stripes as an expert by working for presidents in the last 20 years has passed a screening process that meant that he was agreeable to the pursuit of the arms race, endlessly.

Some of them privately may have had their doubts. In fact, I had lots of doubts when I was in, and lots of my colleagues shared the same doubts. The ones who did not make a radical departure from that line of work--giving up their clearances, in effect--were people who were able to live with those doubts longer than I was--in fact, indefinitely. They are people who have proven that there was no escalation of the arms race that they could not be part of--perhaps reluctantly. They could see the reasons for it. They might not agree with it, but they could see that their boss wasn't necessarily disqualified as president by insisting that what he wanted from them was how to win the arms race, how to get ahead, how to win superiority, or how to keep it going--with the least danger possible, but keep it going.

Which of the Democratic candidates of the last election was against the Freeze? Reuben Askew. Which was for? There was only one real pro-Freeze candidate: Cranston. And he was not really



electable. Also, he compromised himself by not opposing the B-1.

Did we have our best shot with Mondale? Was that the best we could hope for? ...I was told early in '84, "Mondale's not for the Freeze. Neither is Hart. Look who Mondale's advisors are--all of them are against the Freeze." This is not incompatible with being for arms control. Mondale, like his mentor Humphrey, is sincerely for arms control. That does distinguish them from Reagan, who, I can say, is certainly, in his heart, against arms control. He is sincerely, conscientiously, patriotically against arms control. He believes that it is bad for this country and bad for the world.

This came out pretty clearly in his first two years. It has been pretty fuzzed over since then. We succeeded in that; we got him to fuzz over that private belief. But if you read Strobe Talbott's book, **Deadly Gambits**, an unusually detailed insider account by somebody who doesn't believe in the Freeze but does believe in arms control, it becomes clear that Perle, at least, who Talbott describes as dominating arms control in this administration, is absolutely explicit in conversations with the public as opposing arms control. Talbott indicates that Perle got control of the process because Reagan wasn't looking at it very closely. It was inadvertent, he maintains.

This is a peculiar theme in the Talbott book, pertinent to what we are discussing here: that the President didn't notice, that he wasn't paying attention, so Perle determined the decision. Talbott doesn't seem to recognize that Reagan does make decisions time after time, and in every case he comes out on Perle's side. Talbott describes how Perle cleverly framed it this way, Perle got in the last word, etc. But he never examines the simple hypothesis that Reagan agrees with Perle! That is my conclusion.

That means that Mondale was different from Reagan. Mondale's advisors were different from Reagan's advisors. But not different enough to be for a Freeze, because arms controllers are not for a Freeze, on the whole. They are not for ending the arms race, whether because they think it is infeasible or it is undesirable. But it is not on their agenda. And Mondale did not have one advisor, to my knowledge, who regarded the Freeze as a feasible, desirable, practical goal.

My struggle with despair--which I imagine each of us here has private battles with--began a little sooner than some people's. I began to believe the polls around September, after the Ferraro debacle on finances and after the hopes that had been raised by the media about Ferraro. I began to believe the polls that said that a landslide was coming. I noticed that others on the Freeze Strategy Task Force did not take that as an assumption. Randy Kehler was criticized in October for drafting two possible tracks --one if Reagan was elected and one if Mondale was elected. Nearly everyone on the task force except me criticized Randy for



having a Reagan track; they thought this was defeatist. I thought, I am talking to crazy people! Then I realized that they were confronting the same situation I was. All of us were going crazy in our own way. Their way was to deny this until the last moment. So actually, I was coming out of my psychological depression around November--I'd been living with it for a couple of months previously. I noticed that they went into depression in November.

I have been dealing with my despair, in part, by trying simply to understand what happened here, what has been going on. That keeps me busy and is interesting, and I have learned a great deal about it.

Q: Thinking of the Mondale campaign, how can we fault a candidate for waging the kind of campaign needed to get elected? We supported George Brown because he was pro-Freeze, but we didn't wave his pro-Freeze stance in front of the more conservative public when we campaigned for him. If Mondale had come out stronger on the Freeze, he would have seemed too far to the left.

A: Did I hear you say: Mondale waged the kind of campaign he needed to get elected?! Think that over a little. Next point: Does the Freeze define the "left"? With 81% of the public supporting the Freeze, 61% supporting a 6-month bilateral moratorium--all that known to Mondale in September 1984--does that make it a left issue? A majority of the Republican convention delegates in Dallas supported the Freeze. That was the left he was going to court if he had supported the Freeze? How could he have failed to help himself--how could he have done worse--if he had really made strong support of the Freeze a major issue?

You are making the assumption that he was using his best judgment of what he would win with, which went against his deeper instincts which were strongly for a Freeze and a moratorium. I conjecture that that isn't the way it was. I think he was more honest than that--that he wasn't talking about the Freeze because it was something he didn't believe in, not just because he didn't think it would win for him. He was eschewing things which the polls showed would win him support, because his advisors didn't believe in it--that is my guess.

I wish I had heard the following thing a little earlier; it would have affected my notions of the way the election was going. I had assumed that when the platform committee came out with a plank for a six-month moratorium, that must mean that Mondale was for it. Marvelous, I thought. I didn't hear till after the election that the Mondale representatives on the platform committee had been strongly against that plank. I said, "How can that be? He was going to be the candidate. He didn't control the platform committee?" If I had known this, I wouldn't have been so surprised when I didn't hear him mention that plank, even to get himself up out of a rhetorical hole, a debating trap, in the campaign. So I am just saying that we didn't have a candidate who



believed in what we believed in. He believed in arms control, but he didn't believe in our form of arms control for ending the arms race.

I don't think it is just the presidential candidates that are the problem. What I draw from this is that as of now, the public is part of the problem, sadly enough. And the Freeze campaign is too, in the sense that we didn't communicate well enough what we believe to the public, or we didn't convince them. I think we kidded ourselves in what we thought those polls meant, that 65-81% supported the Freeze.

Here is a conjecture as to what those majorities meant. I think we began to roll toward those majorities in an era when Reagan was not only expressing extreme positions (which he has learned, under our tutelage, not to say) about nuclear war being winnable and survivable. He has retreated publicly to the arms control position of his predecessors, which had always been good enough in the past to keep the arms race going--and still is. Above all, we were rolling up those majorities in a period when Reagan wasn't talking with the Soviets at all.

What editorialists had been saying (and I had thought that they were just anti-Freeze) was this: The public buys the Freeze slogan to express their concern about the problem. I had thought that was mistaken. It seemed so clear to me that the Freeze was totally different from past arms control proposals; it was exactly the right thing to do. I, wishfully, believed those editorial writers were all wrong, that the public saw what I saw: that the Freeze is exactly what we need now, and that it is much better than any of the other arms control proposals. I now think that I was mistaken. The Freeze was a proposal advanced at a time when Congress wasn't coming up with any, and when the President wasn't talking to the Soviets. The support for the Freeze was support for arms control. That's what most of it was, and is.

If that is true, it would follow that the Freeze does not appear clearly to the public to be necessarily preferable to START, SALT III, various proposals, SDI, etc., "as long as we are talking to the Russians." The available data suggests this. We have no data suggesting that the public prefers the Freeze to these other arms control proposals. From my point of view, that is awful. There is all the difference in the world between them; the Freeze stops the arms race, all the other approaches accelerate it. That means that most of our work remains to be done.

#### THE PUBLIC'S MOOD TOWARD NUCLEAR WEAPONS

It occurred to me, as I thought of summarizing the findings of the Yankelovich study,<sup>1</sup> that for those who haven't had the

---

<sup>1</sup>Voter Options on Nuclear Arms Policy: A Briefing Book for the 1984 Elections, The Public Agenda Foundation, 1984



fun of doing the research and only hear the conclusions--well, it's not good news, on the whole. But my talk tonight isn't meant to be inspirational.

The paradox we were facing in September was that one could foresee that at least half of the 80% of the public who supported the Freeze in the polls were about to vote for Ronald Reagan. What made that seem paradoxical and threatening was that, on the one hand, the evidence said that the issue was important in the public mind. And on the other hand, there did seem to be a night and day difference between these two candidates on these issues, despite whatever else you could say about them. We did have a choice between a man who said--I'm referring now to the Democratic platform--that he would announce a moratorium on testing of warheads and ballistic missiles on his first day in office. He was the first party candidate ever to say that: that he would end the arms race in his first day in office, indefinitely if the Soviets joined him. And then you have a man who guarantees that he will not do that. That he will pursue the arms race and he will not even propose a Freeze. Now between those two people, you did have a genuine choice.

So how could this be happening? One factor: practically no one knew that that was in the Democratic platform, or that Mondale ever said it. It was hard to believe, but almost no one knew about it. That black-and-white distinction just wasn't there in the public mind. Some of you also knew from polls that were done right here in this vicinity in August that many people thought that Reagan was for the Freeze. So we hadn't communicated that difference.

Let's take the moratorium point, which was for me the crucial one. "All right," I thought, "maybe Mondale has no advisors who are really for the Freeze as a whole. Maybe they think that production isn't verifiable, etc. But he is committed on this moratorium." Yet nobody knew it. Why not? Because Mondale never, to my knowledge, said it publicly after the convention. Ferraro said it once or twice. But not Mondale. He notably failed to say it in his second debate. What was the use of saying he was for the Freeze? Bill Curry counted 27 days after the convention before the word "Freeze" came out of Mondale's mouth. Curry said that was a policy decision--as he understood it--that Mondale needed to appear tough. He had the Freeze people anyway (ha-ha-ha--he had half the Freeze people; the other half voted for Reagan). The Freeze public actually wasn't what he was going after. Finally he was asked twice in his second debate to name something that was verifiable. That can be answered unequivocally by the contents of the Quick Freeze, the moratorium defined in the platform: i.e., testing warheads, testing of all ballistic missiles. If you want to string the answer out, you list all the ballistic missiles to be tested, tests that are 100% verifiable, unequivocally and uncontroversally verifiable. And Mondale couldn't think of **anything** that would be adequately verifiable. He didn't mention anything that would be covered by the moratorium, nor did he mention the moratorium itself.



And I think that whatever your position toward the Freeze was, you had to say at that point, "This man is not for the Freeze." So, Reagan wasn't for the Freeze. Mondale wasn't particularly for the Freeze. The choice in this election was not determined by the **public's** lack of interest in a Freeze. It turns out to be unclear on that.

The **Foreign Affairs** article by Yankelovich and Doble<sup>2</sup> says that the attitudes of the public are such that this election campaign "gives the candidates a historic opportunity to build public support for reducing the risk of nuclear war. The time is ripe for a great debate." But this did not happen. I kept asking myself during the campaign, why isn't this a major issue? It received much more attention in the Democratic primaries. In the Reagan-Mondale campaign, it never became a major issue of discussion. Why? Yankelovich was puzzled by this. It was not what he expected. Reading the article and report, you would have expected it to be a major issue. And it would appear to be one highly favorable to our side.

One can summarize the most striking result of the study: there has been a major change in public attitudes from the '60's and 70's--even from 1980, even from 1982. There was a significant change from '80 to '82, and again from '82-'83. Our movement has had a major role in causing this change. Reagan was, of course, also highly influential by his early statements about nuclear war. They led to the growth of the European movement, and then our movement. Physicians for Social Responsibility also has had a major impact.

People now believe that nuclear war is **unwinnable, unlimitable, and unsurvivable**. They contradict, obviously, the attitudes that Reagan carelessly and candidly expressed--as did some of his other people (Weinberger, Haig, T.K. Jones). The public refutes those attitudes. This would seem very favorable for Mondale. And that is the major part of our own message.

Moreover, the public now believes that the bargaining chip idea is crazy. "If we add new weapons, the Soviets will simply add new weapons to counter them. It will not lead to better negotiations." And so forth. That is a rather specific attitude. It cuts against one of Reagan's major points. Again, it would seem very favorable to an opponent of Reagan. It coincides with the message we have been putting out: "Superiority in the arms race is unattainable."

Finally, two more rather startling findings: 74% of the public believes that the U.S. should not initiate nuclear war under any circumstances, including specifically a Soviet attack

---

<sup>2</sup>Daniel Yankelovich and John Doble, "The Public Mood," **Foreign Affairs**, Vol. 63, No. 1, Fall 1984



with non-nuclear weapons on Western Europe. We should not, even in that specific case, initiate nuclear war.

That goes together with a piece of misinformation: 81% of the public believes that that is **now** our policy--that we will not initiate nuclear war under any circumstances. But put these two together, and it takes the urgency out of the need to elect a President different from Reagan on that issue. The policy **is** what it should be, in their (mistaken) view.

You might well think that the public, then, should be informed of this--what his policy actually is--so they would want to change it. But if they think the policy **is** what it should be, no first use, then we didn't do a lot to educate them on that point: that the policy is first use, and should not be. We failed to encourage them to change the policy.

Another point: 38% of the public believes that nuclear war is very likely or somewhat likely within the next 10 years: 50% of those under 30. That means that half of those under 30 will tell a pollster they do not expect to live to age 40.

Q: You said that you were more depressed by your conversations with Yankelovich--more so than the report itself. What did you learn in conversation that isn't in the report?

A: It wasn't the conversation so much as going over the study, reading the analysis. Yankelovich drew the same conclusions from the data as those I have just presented. Our message seems to have gotten through and been accepted. The idea that we need to put the same message out seems to be mistaken. We could conclude that we have succeeded in getting our message out. Why, then, did it not affect the election? One is left with that depressing question.

Let me suggest a new interpretation. He concludes that on the issues I have just described, the public is unanimous and firm and will not be shifted. But on other issues, he says, they have contradictory, uncertain beliefs. On further analysis of the wording of the questions, I did not see such inconsistencies in the answers as Yankelovich suggested. I had a different interpretation, in the light of which the public's answers were consistent. I did go over this with his team at length, and they had to agree that their conclusions had been off the mark in a number of instances. This was not good news, because the consistency may be a consistency with Reagan's policy as the public understands it. (His actual policy, not his announced views, as they understand the policy.) That is possibly not as easy to change. In other words, there's a lot more work ahead to change support for the policies, putting aside the views he expressed earlier.

One key example is this. Yankelovich and his assistant John Doble regarded the following two answers as inconsistent: (1) The



majority say we should not initiate nuclear war for any cause on earth. (2) "Would you risk nuclear war to prevent a certain area being taken over by the Communists?" "Yes," a majority said. That is treated as an inconsistency by authors of the report. But notice, it is **not** inconsistent. It is not logically or practically inconsistent to say, "I would not start a war, I would not use weapons, in the sense of actually exploding them, for **any** purpose. But I would **risk** nuclear war for some purposes. I would gamble. For some big enough causes I would even accept an increased risk. I would take a chance." That, unfortunately, is not inconsistent. And it's Reagan's policy. It may be the policy they think they are supporting--and it is, in fact, what they are supporting.

I asked Doble, "Did you ever ask the question, 'What do you think about **threatening** nuclear war?'" They didn't ask it. But another survey did. In a poll done for the Committee on the Present Danger<sup>3</sup>(which got similar answers to Yankelovich for similar questions), the question was asked: "Do you favor or oppose **telling** the Soviets that we will not respond with nuclear weapons if they attack our allies?" (emphasis added) That poses a **formal**, explicit no-first-use commitment. 66% **opposed telling** the Soviets that we will not respond with nuclear weapons if they attack our allies (20% favored; so more than 3:1 opposed, of those who had an opinion).

The Committee on the Present Danger summarizes this result, reasonably: "A substantial majority of Americans...support the **threatened** use of nuclear weapons to deter a Soviet attack against U.S. allies..." (emphasis added) A longer summary (April 16, 1984) adds: "College-educated respondents were the most opposed [66-71%] to telling the Soviets that we would not use nuclear weapons to defend our allies." It goes on, in a comment strengthening the distinction between "threat" and "actual use" in the responses: "Sixty-three per cent favored retaliation against the Soviet Union after a nuclear attack on the United States, even though such action might result in the destruction of both countries. Interestingly, the college educated citizens were most opposed to the actual use of nuclear weapons. This same group was the most in favor of keeping up the threat of their use to defend our allies."

So in this sense Mondale was not wrong in terms of public attitudes when he strongly fought Jackson's minority plank for the platform, calling for a no-first-use policy. Mondale had the majority with him after all, it turns out. I suspect Yankelovich would not have guessed that.

---

<sup>3</sup>Penn and Schoen Associates, "The Nuclear Freeze and Other Nuclear Arms Issues," for the Committee on the Present Danger, April 1984



It is good news that the majority of Americans (even those subjected to a college education!) do not want the weapons "actually used." They don't want nuclear threats to be implemented if they fail; they want the threats to be bluffs. But they do think the threats are needed, to protect our allies and interests. They want the "bluffs" to be made. This is bad news: worse than it may appear at first. For it would follow--and their voting behavior is, regrettably, consistent with this--that they should be receptive to buying the kinds of first-use, first-strike and escalatory weapons that enhance the **credibility** of such threats. A consequence--in the absence of a mutual Freeze that would stop such threat-and-counterthreat-enhancing weapons on both sides--is the emergence of counterpart weapons in Soviet hands. And that is what the current, dangerous arms race **is**.

Freeze literature in St. Louis in December, 1984, asserted: "We have convinced the American public of the risks of the arms race." On the basis of these data, I would say, "That's wrong." We have convinced them of the risks associated with a nuclear **war**. We have **not** convinced them of the risks associated with the new nuclear **weapons**: risks of testing them, deploying them, threatening <sup>with</sup> them. Many people see the ongoing arms race as wasteful; but not enough yet see it, as we do, as adding immediately, on balance, to our overall **danger**. We have not convinced them that threats are not necessary, or not safe enough. That means that we have not convinced them that the means to make threats credible and effective are to be opposed. We have not taught them that Reagan's arms race is an unacceptable approach to peace.

What it comes down to is this: Reagan has **his** approach to peace, just as we have ours. And the public is convinced, and must be right, that he is sincere in wanting peace. He did not run on a platform of nuclear war, and surely we did not elect a man who wants nuclear war, and the public knows that.

Second, he did not run on the way he really believes, which he showed in his first two years of office. We ran against Reagan in 1983-84, somewhat anachronistically, as he had shown himself in 1981. We convinced the public that he had been wrong to say that nuclear war was winnable, limitable, or survivable. So he stopped saying that, and he has pursued the same policies with no problems.

It turns out that these policies do not **depend**, necessarily, on the crazy notions probably still held by Reagan, Weinberger, and Perle: that nuclear war is winnable, limitable and survivable. How do we know that they don't depend on that? Because the actual policies are the same that every President--Democratic or Republican--has pursued for the last 40 years. The policies haven't suddenly changed with Reagan. Nor have the types of weapons. Every weapon, with the exception of the B-1, that he is pursuing now is a Carter-Mondale weapon. **They** didn't pursue them because they thought nuclear war was winnable, limitable, or



survivable. They didn't believe that. They pursued them because they were seen as necessary to threaten, to intimidate, and to protect U.S. interests abroad, to "win" peace that way.

Those aims--and the weapons they call for--are wholly compatible with the arms control approach of Carter and his predecessors, and they generate the same arms build-ups as the Reagan views, so far. And of course, in addition to these "external" motives to protect U.S. overseas' interests by means of threats, there are the domestic incentives that are, in themselves, also sufficient to sustain the build-ups. The Air Force and Navy "need" new missiles; the producers need new contracts; the unions need jobs; the Congressional and Presidential candidates need votes and contributions. Again, these needs can all be satisfied under any of the "arms control" approaches--except the Freeze.

So it will not be enough to get Mondale or any of his advisors as a candidate next time, or anybody like him. It will have to be somebody who has a very different attitude--our attitude--and we will have to convince the American public that there is a critical difference in favor of the Freeze and against what Reagan has now learned to talk about: SALT III, START, Build-down, and now Star Wars. We have to teach the public that these last approaches--traditional "arms control," managing the arms race rather than halting and reversing it--are not good enough. We need an entirely different way. The Freeze **is** that entirely different way. And we have not done that yet. We haven't taught that. Nor will this message be easily accepted. It would be necessary to confront, expose, challenge and overcome--or transform and transcend--all of these incentives, rooted in powerful institutions, national interests, and psychological needs. (That is a long-term project; we'd better buy some time for it.)

**Q:** How do we get the word out that to threaten and intimidate the use of nuclear weapons is a dangerous path to nuclear war? How do we convince them of the dangers of the arms race?

**A:** A major factor that promotes tolerance of the arms race and of nuclear weapons is the fact that there has been no nuclear war for 40 years, and indeed, no major conventional war. For this the existence of nuclear weapons is given great credit, with some plausibility. That would seem to imply that the existence of nuclear weapons and the policies pursued by all these Presidents (which have been very similar) have reduced the chances of general conventional war and have not brought about a nuclear war. So why shouldn't this continue to be the case?

A lot of people draw from this fact a mistaken inference: that we have not been **close** to nuclear war, and that no U.S. President has ever been close to pushing a button.



The facts, as I read them, are very comparable to the illumination one gets when one reads the context and background of a major airline accident: that there have been a lot of near-misses. That this wasn't just "out of the blue." For instance, it is how I felt after Three Mile Island. The day after, the New York Times published two full pages of previous near-meltdowns. All of a sudden, these were newsworthy; they must have been in the Times' files all the time. This meant that we had been living in a somewhat different world from reality--we had been listening to scientists who not only said a meltdown was unlikely, but that mathematically it was impossible. The fact was, there had been a number of near-meltdowns.

And the fact is that there have been a lot of **near nuclear wars**. The public doesn't know this. The public should know that our official policy is to initiate the use of nuclear weapons under a number of circumstances. I'm not sure that would be enough to get the message across--because when the public says, "We don't think they would ever use nuclear weapons, we don't think currently it is our policy to use nuclear weapons," the public may think that, regardless of what the President says, he will not in fact use nuclear weapons. A lot of people, including a lot of Europeans, believe that. People almost **have** to believe that, if they support a first use policy. Or they think of NATO as a "breakaway alliance": we threaten up to the point of using nuclears in combat, and then we back down, or the alliance collapses.

Here is the problem with that. Threats lead to implementation, to preparations, to enhance their credibility and effectiveness. And both the threats and the preparations induce a countering process on the other side--often unforeseen, unimagined, or more quickly, more ominously, and with greater commitment than the initial threatener expected. It is an interlocking process, inducing a further reaction on both sides. This makes it more likely that the threats will get carried out: that armed conflict will occur, persist and escalate. Thus threats intended to reduce certain risks--and which may do that, in the short-run--bring about a world in which one's overall risks **increase**.

U.S. Presidents have used our nuclear weapons many times since Nagasaki: used them as you use a gun when you point it at someone's head, whether or not you pull the trigger. Our Presidents have made threats or preparations that, in effect, passed the trigger to nuclear war to our opponents on a dozen or so occasions. According to Eisenhower, if the Chinese had not backed down in Korea in 1953 and accepted his terms for a stalemate agreement, he would have used nuclear weapons. Maybe one in twenty Americans knows that. Nixon made comparable threats in 1969, having learned from Eisenhower. Maybe one in a thousand knows that.

Many other threats were made. Of course, there are also other dangers---accidental war, false alarms, proliferation--**all**



**real.** But what is missing from public consciousness is that every President we have elected has actually had occasion to consider seriously the imminent use of nuclear weapons in an ongoing crisis. Every President, with the possible exception of Ford. We have come that close. That doesn't prove that this can't be changed. It does mean that our dangers are deeper-rooted and more immediate than people have supposed, and that they won't be eliminated as soon as we can focus the President's attention on the subject. And people do need to know what our Presidents' actual policy **is.**

**Q:** Here is a problem. Polls show that 61% believe that the Soviets respond only to military strength. 65% believe that if we are weak, the Soviets will attack us or our allies. You are telling them that we made the threat and they backed down. Therefore, threatening works. How do you get around that?

**A:** Of course threatening can work, and often has. Do you support it? ("Maybe.") Do you support the Freeze? ("Yes.") Well, the Freeze makes it difficult or impossible to **enhance** our failing ability to make credible threats. With the Russians' building up, our threats are getting less credible. If we must **rely** on those threats, if we have a right and a **need** to threaten to initiate **nuclear** war, then you should reevaluate your support for the Freeze.

First-use-policy implies that we need more weapons, of exactly the kind that Reagan is buying, if we need to keep the ability to threaten. We are losing it--we are losing our credibility. Reagan says that, and he is right. It is self-evident. Absent his policies, at least, we are losing our ability to threaten. He wants to bring it back, with the MX and the D-5 (Trident II), and the sea-launched cruise missiles and the neutron bombs.

The neutron bombs--"enhanced radiation/suppressed blast" warheads--are ideal for initiating short-range "tactical" nuclear operations on the battlefield, turning a conventional conflict into a "limited" nuclear war. The highly precise cruise missiles, along with the intermediate-range Pershing II, are ideal for **escalating** such a war, "if necessary"--i.e. if the Soviets **respond** in kind to U.S./NATO first-use; thus, their deployment helps **deter** such Soviet retaliation, "making the world safe for U.S. (unilateral) first use," just as the neutron bombs and other "tactical" nuclear weapons for first-use help make the world safe for U.S. interventions by the Rapid Deployment Force. Finally, the Soviets are to be deterred from "even thinking about" replying in kind (by ~~theater~~ attacks) to prospective uses of the Pershing II and cruise missiles, by the prospect of a preemptive, disarming first-strike by the MX and Trident II (D-5). The MX--both threatening to and threatened by the Soviets' heavy missiles --is also subject to a "use it or lose it" pressure in an ongoing crisis or war.



The answer is not that threats can't work. Threats have worked, for the most part. (Nixon's threat in 1969 didn't work, and he didn't carry it out. Does this mean that all the other threats, or even this one, were bluffs? No. He had a specific reason he tells us in his memoirs, for not carrying out his ultimatum in November 1969. Between 1-2 million people were in the streets on October 15, 1969, in a protest called the Moratorium, and half a million in Washington on November 15, 1969. It wasn't the right time for him to carry out his threat, so he backed down.)

Yes, the threats can work. But they can also **not** work. And they are getting less and less likely to work as the Russians match us. The one time a nuclear threat fails to work and gets carried out, we may lose the world. That is what is wrong with the policy.

#### NEED FOR URGENT ACTION

I don't think we have a lot of time to achieve a Freeze, or in any sense end the arms race. I don't think we have forever to do that. I don't think we have two more Presidential elections to do it. I was really asking myself whether we had one more, or whether our last chance had gone by. That is a reasonable hypothesis, that we have lost it. But I am persuaded that we do have one more chance, because of the timing of some of the new weapons testing that is coming along.

To exploit that chance, if it exists, will take two things. It will take a President in '89 whose commitment is entirely, radically different from that of any previous major candidate. He will have to act fast to stop the SDI, Strategic Defensive Initiative, the tests that are scheduled for '89 if they haven't come earlier. He will have to stop the deployment of the Trident II/ D-5, which will be starting that year, and the continued deployment of SLCM's and the continued MX--he's got to move fast, which means he must have been elected with a quite different commitment and mandate from any we have seen. So the public mood will have had to change **under Reagan**.

Second, Congress will have had to hold Reagan down from year to year, starting this March, on programs that he wants to pursue, to which the Russians will reply in ways that guarantee a continued arms race. If Reagan does everything he wants to do every year for the next four years, I suspect that the Soviets will respond--starting this year--in ways that will make the arms race irreversible, even by some extraordinary new President in '89. So we've got to restrain Reagan through Congress during that time.

I think I kidded myself on the 81% supporting the Freeze. It did seem to define this as an urgent issue in the minds of the public. (The election results themselves don't indicate if the



public thought the issue was urgent or not. They could have felt Reagan was the right man to handle the problem.) Actually, looking at all the data, I conclude that the American public as a whole does not yet regard ending the arms race as a high priority issue or an urgent issue, considering what is feasible and considering other issues like the economy pressing on us. I don't think they voted as if **ending the arms race by a Freeze** was urgent or high priority. If you ask them why that would be, marketing researchers in Northern California show that when people were asked the open-ended question, "How do you reduce the risks of the arms race, the risks of nuclear war?", the first answer everybody came up with was: "Talk to the Russians." The Freeze was fairly low in that list. They thought of other things. That might surprise some of you. It surprised me.

It even surprised the pollsters for the Committee on the Present Danger, who got the same result. They asked, "Why do you support the Freeze?" "Surprisingly," their summaries report, "the Freeze is seen more as a budget-cutting measure than an answer to the country's defense problems. Only one-third said that a nuclear freeze would reduce the chance of a nuclear war while 55% said it would 'only reduce the expense of continuing to develop nuclear weapons.'"

And again, in that study they found people believe that the way you solve it is: talking to the Russians. Reagan learned that, and now he is talking to the Russians. If there are no talks next year, it will be for the same reasons there were none last year: that the Russians walked out. He is not going to take responsibility for that again. I suggest that the public is currently in the state of mind that, as long as we are talking with the Soviets, they are not urgently and strongly pressing for a Freeze versus Reagan's proposals. So we should not only be shaping the public's idea of what the proposals are, but also making them feel that the Freeze is urgent.

The public must come to believe that the Freeze is urgently needed--not just desirable. I don't think saving money defines this issue as urgent enough, or ever will. For example, the Strategic Defense Initiative is budgeted for \$3.8 billion, which will look small in the defense budget as a whole. Unless we perform a miracle, he will probably get most of it. That may be disastrous. It's got to be a reason other than saving money, or in addition to saving money.

The reason that I thought that the Freeze was urgent is a reason the Freeze hasn't talked much about, and maybe we should, despite the complexities and problems. It is not just the cost or the number of weapons that are being added that define the problem. It is the **type** of weapons that are being added. It is the fact that the situation is becoming **unstable**, a term which I guarantee almost nobody in the public could define at this point, although the word is used a lot.



The risk of nuclear war initiated by one side or the other, or by other parties, is in fact going up as a result of this arms race. **Going up**, not just being continued. We have to spell out the reasons for that. We have to explain the Strategic Defense Initiative not just in terms of its high cost, or the probability that it won't work. The key thing is that it guarantees the indefinite continuation of an offensive and defensive arms race, one that is bringing us weapons that make the world more dangerous than it used to be. We have to oppose these weapons--MX, ASAT-testing, Trident II/D-5, and SLCM's and mobile missiles that make verification almost impossible--along with the whole set of Soviet counterparts. These are all things pushing ahead this year and every year thereafter.

In other words, the Freeze can't just be seen as an **alternative** to weapon-by-weapon campaigns. In hindsight, I think we should have been part of SANE's and Common Cause's campaigns that focused on single weapons--in **addition** to working on the Freeze. We work also on the moratorium issue, which does go beyond those. And we do have to talk about intervention--the "deadly connection"--which we are starting to do. The reason we needed the Freeze **now**, not 6-8 years from now, is, above all, that these new weapons coming along markedly strengthen the deadly connection between intervention and use of nuclear weapons, along with the likelihood of nuclear escalation once any nuclear weapons have exploded. They make the world far more dangerous. We cannot afford to freeze the arms race only **after** we have acquired these new weapons, which is what Reagan is promising. We need, by every means, to stop these new weapons--mainly through Congress, and by an entirely new public mood. We have a lot of educating--of ourselves and of the public--ahead of us.

One thing that you might do this weekend is open yourselves up to "despairing" hypotheses for the creative things that may come out of that. It may stop you from looking in certain directions and help you open your eyes to other directionss.

A very depressing hypothesis, one that I think is still worth thinking about, is that we just passed our last chance for ending the arms race. Rather than deny that--for we would prefer to spend our time blinded to certain things--let's just look at the realities openly and allow that as a possibility. **Why** might that be true? One reason would be that the programs that Reagan is pushing through right now may make the arms race **irreversible**, in three ways. **First**, they will give momentum to programs like the D-5, which is coming up for a relatively big jump in funding this year; the MX; and so forth. It is a kind of momentum that you may not be able to stop four years from now, even with a new President. The SLCM, which is being imitated by the Soviet Union, may prove unverifiable. There is another side to this; some say there won't be that many MX or Trident II or SLCM's by '89. If there is an answer to these risks, it is to hold down the pace now of funding, testing and deployment through Congress. Congress



seems very unlikely to kill the programs altogether, unilaterally.

The Strategic Defense Initiative, Star Wars, with all of its appeal to the public, is **antithetical** to any lid on the arms race and to preventing these new weapons. If we go ahead with the program in the way that the Russians can see has strong momentum, they will probably break through the SALT II limits with an offensive build-up, even starting this year with the SS-25 and other things. That will then be sufficient excuse for going ahead full blast with the MX, even if we stop it this spring. These weapons evoke imitation by the Soviets. The SDI goes even further to provoke Soviet buildup. If we stop the MX this spring but give Reagan the SDI, the Russians then say, "Thanks for nothing. Even without the MX, the SDI means we are going to need a lot more offensive weapons." So they break through the SALT II limits, and Reagan says, "Look. Congress didn't give me the MX, and you see what happened. Now we need it." So he gets both. And not only 100 MX. Say, 250.

#### WORKING ON CONGRESS

Q: What does it mean if we are to switch from Presidential candidates like Mondale to those who share our sentiments? What are our alternatives? Jackson? The Green Party? What are your thoughts, looking toward '88?

I have defined highly improbable requirements for a President, an anti-nuclear hero. I don't really believe we are going to get one, even if the public mood does change. But a state of despair can be creative, because it can turn your attention to other directions. I don't think we are going to get a "serious" Presidential candidate who is not in line with the thinking of past arms controllers and who doesn't rely on people from previous administrations. I think that means we are going to have to achieve real success in ending the arms race **against** the President. Fortunately, we have two other branches of government: and we may be in the process of losing one, the courts. So that leaves Congress.

There is a hopeful precedent. No Presidential election helped end the Vietnam War; Congressional elections did. Congress ended the Vietnam War. The Vietnamese didn't and couldn't. Congress did. They did not do it on their own; without public pressure there would have been no initiatives by Congress. Congressional elections as late as '72 and '74 were crucial. In the Watergate era and in the period leading up to that, the years of pressure on Congress were crucial.

I think what is implied is this. The Freeze's focus on the President--which followed from its very definition and nature as a **negotiating** aim--was simply wrong as an exclusive focus for the era. It wasn't our fault that Reagan got reelected; the economy



was the predominant factor in that. He managed to pull it out in the last year, and that assured his election. It's just too bad that we had to propose the Freeze under Reagan. At this point it has no prospects whatever of being proposed or adopted for the next four years by the Executive or our negotiators, unless Reagan and Bush are both impeached.

What could we, the Freeze, have done before, and what should we do now? Looking back on it--and this is hindsight to a large extent--we defined a goal that could only be achieved by the President. We called for a mutual halt that included production, as well as testing and deployment; that calls for specific measures of cooperative verification, which have to be negotiated. Only a President can do that. But Reagan wasn't going to do that. Yet we did not define--and never have, to this day, defined clearly--what our program was **before** a Freeze was achieved, or **until** a Freeze was achieved, or if a Freeze was **not** achieved. In effect, we left that to the other groups--all of whom are very small. They are not like the Freeze in grass-roots breadth, and they have not succeeded (whether we could have or not).

Notice that even the other speaker tonight, as close as he is to the Freeze, is off in his definition of what the Freeze's attitude is toward the cruise, MX, Trident D-5, etc., in the **absence** of a Freeze. He was right up until 1983, the MX vote in the spring of 1983, that the Freeze campaign did not specifically oppose individual weapons "unilaterally." But at that point the Freeze awoke to the thought, "My God! We have not defined what our attitude is on this issue of the MX, and we'd better do something here." Whereupon the National Committee, after that vote, **did** then put the Freeze, in principle and a good deal in practice, behind the lobbying against the MX (a little late).

That December in the National Conference--and most people who support the Freeze still do not know this, the word didn't get out--there was a national decision in 1983 and again more strongly in 1984, enabling the staff to take positions in the name of the Freeze, against individual weapons systems that would compromise our eventual ability to get a Freeze. That included not only the MX, but the Trident D-5, Pershing II, the cruise--things that Mondale said he was for in the second debate. By the way, in the second debate he **omitted** a statement he had made earlier: "In the absence of a Freeze." He just said very clearly, "I am for the Trident II, Pershing II, GLCM's, the Stealth." He opposed the B-1 and the MX. (And he indicated to the Times that he only opposed the MX in fixed silos, i.e. the Reagan basing.)

So I am saying: **Do it through Congress.** We have to define goals that can be achieved through Congress. **And we should stop saying, "The Freeze is the first step."** It is self-evident that there are a lot of other steps that we had better be doing before we get a Freeze. That means we have to have the program that the National Committee and the National Conference have now adopted,



a much broader program than that. But we haven't gotten that information out to the troops or to the public at large.

We must have a better Congress in '86-'87, and a new candidate. Another favorable element was described in the Yankelovich study in September 1984: "Beyond a Freeze, majorities also endorse other strategies containing an explicit element of risk. For example, a 61% majority favors the idea of declaring a unilateral 6-month Freeze on nuclear weapons development, to see if the Soviets will follow suit. That is the so-called "Quick Freeze." That is the moratorium that was in the Democratic platform, and that Mondale, on one occasion known to me, said that he endorsed. Why didn't he mention it in the second debate, with 61% telling him this? I think we should entertain the hypothesis that Mondale was surrounded entirely by people who did not believe in such a moratorium or an end to the arms race--part of the other 19% or 29%--so for all practical purposes he did not believe in it.

But Congress isn't in the thrall of arms advisors of that sort. They listen a little more to their voters back home.

#### GENEVA TALKS

Q: Do you see anything positive coming out of the current Geneva arms control negotiations?

A: No.

Q: Can negotiations be part of a solution?

A: In the longer run, they must be. But we must do what we have not yet done. We must convince the public that they must have an attitude of **what they want** to be proposed at Geneva, and what they want Congress to do if the President won't propose it at Geneva. I do not mean to suggest that we ignore Geneva.

Even in the short run, I would suggest that we tell Congress and the President that what we want is a moratorium (which the Soviets have also proposed) on testing of warheads and ballistic missiles. With 61% favoring this, we demand it. If the President won't propose it--which I think he won't--then Congress can institute it by stopping the funding. That is what we want from them. (I emphasize warheads and ballistic missiles because these are verifiable without further negotiations, so that Congress can by-pass the Executive in seeking reciprocal **practice** from the Soviets.)

We do not want the public only to say, "We want talks." The public should be saying at last, "We want talks about **this**, to achieve **this**."



## COMPREHENSIVE FREEZE BILL

Q: Is the Comprehensive Freeze as the centerpiece of the Freeze's legislative strategy in 1985 a good idea, given that it probably won't pass Congress this year? Is that your assessment of its prospects?

A: I don't think it is a good idea to press the Comprehensive Freeze through Congress, i.e. to twist arms in pursuit of a majority (as distinct from an "educational" effort, which is fine.) I'm persuaded by those who work closely with Congress that the idea of getting Congress to take that much initiative--in effect, responsibility--for somehow achieving verification of the full production process, without the cooperation of the Executive Branch, is just out of the question. You can get lip service to that from a number of Congresspeople who want to to satisfy their Freeze constituency and can do it costlessly this way because it's not going to happen. Reagan won't blame them and punish them for their vote on this because he knows it isn't going to happen and he understands their problem. So they can just do it...like the people who voted for the Freeze and then voted for the MX. I don't think that is a useful approach. In my opinion, the Comprehensive Freeze legislation is not worth a lot of **pressure**. This is controversial view within the Freeze, but that's my belief.

Q: You mentioned that you didn't think we should focus on the Comprehensive Freeze, that you think what we need to have is a moratorium on funding. I want to point out that that is what the Comprehensive Freeze is calling for: a 6-month moratorium on testing and deployment.

A: I haven't seen the latest draft. If that's so, fine; but I would be just as glad to see that "initial" part be the focus of real **pressure** on Congress, unencumbered by the rest.

## COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN

There is a lot of interest in a Comprehensive Test Ban this year. We are talking about warhead testing. I would be delighted if there were as much enthusiasm for stopping flight testing, but there isn't at the moment. Internationally, there is a lot of interest in the CTB because there is another window being closed in the fall when the Non-Proliferation Treaty is up for review. Many countries have taken the opposite position from Argentina: "If you don't at last carry out the superpower agreements under the treaty and end testing, we will not only not sign the treaty, but we will make nuclear weapons also." This adds to the urgency and pressure on us.

I will translate this into what we can do. Congress seems likely to pass a resolution calling on the President to negotiate a CTB treaty. That, in my opinion, is **worthless**, except insofar



as it is understood to be an **immediate** precursor to a fund cut-off. In itself, it should not get a bit of our support, or a bit of our thanks to people like Vic Fazio when he votes for that along with the MX. We should say, "That is not what you were elected for. If you don't use your power to **stop** the testing, we will fire you next time." I wish people like Fazio had been fired in November for voting for the MX every time while being a Freeze "supporter." We should say, "You can do this moratorium. You can cut off the funds for testing. That is within your power, whatever the President says. The President will not follow your resolution, but you don't depend on him. We elect you to carry out our will. You can cut off the funds for nuclear warhead testing for six months, and invite the Soviets to join." The chance of their joining is high. "Save the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Don't kiss it good-bye in November 1985, because the President didn't carry out your resolution. We want you to end the testing and save the treaty."

Proliferation isn't something the public has to be taught about, unlike first use. I think there is an actual possibility for us. And you notice the Freeze is in support of an August 6 direct action at the Nevada Test Site. The fact that we ever came to that position is amazing. If the Freeze is willing to consider that, that tells me something about the country. So does the fact that 700 people came to the National Conference in St. Louis, most of them for the first time, at a time I thought there would only be a handful of depressed people. Those of you who were there know that there was a lot of energy for doing something. There are some real possibilities this year, even after last November.